

Retrouvailles by **TheMikeWheelers (jasongracefully)**

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Summary:

Retrouvailles: A French word not directly translatable to English, meaning the feeling of joy one gets when reuniting with a loved one after a long separation

Retrouvailles

You came back to me.

I missed you so much.

Never leave me again.

Thoughts jumbled around in Mike's head, none of them being *enough* to say what he wanted to convey, nothing could ever truly capture the way he felt in that moment.

She was *back*. There were no existing words that could express the swelling in Mike's heart upon seeing her.

But there she was, right before his eyes Mike saw Eleven standing there, with her hair tangled and her face covered in dirt, but Mike couldn't notice any of that, because all he could see was her eyes wide open, staring right back at him.

She was terrified, he could see that clearly, shaking and dirty. Mike had never figured that wherever she had disappeared to had been a good place, but he couldn't get over how utterly *traumatized* she was.

They were in the Byers house, the chief had called all of them to come over, but when Mike stepped into his best friend's house, he never expected to see El. She'd been gone for almost a year now, there comes a point when even the strongest hope fades.

Everything had been acting up in Hawkins again, starting with the flickering lights, then Mike began to see Department of Energy trucks more and more around town, and then that 7-year-old girl had gone missing. Mike was suspicious that things had started up again, but that thought only depressed him. He didn't want to go through that week in last November again, he didn't want to face a monster, but most of all he didn't want to do any of this knowing that *she wasn't there to fight with him*.

The Chief's call immediately brought terror to Mike's mind, fears and ideas jumped around screaming at him that the Demogorgon was

back, Will was missing again, or someone had gone to the Upside Down. He had practically dropped the phone when it hung up, and raced on his bike to head over to the Byers.

He ran into Lucas and Dustin on the street, and they had no idea what was going on either, so they just peddled faster and faster in hopes that nothing was wrong.

But for the first time in over a year, nothing was wrong. Everything was *perfect* in Mike's life, because the girl he had missed for so long was standing right there in front of him.

Eleven never truly knew what it meant for someone to be happy to see you. No one in the lab ever felt any joy upon her presence, just obligation, disgust, and what bothered El the most-- fear. She never understood this concept that just her being there could make someone *happy*, but as she sat there on the Byers' couch, it seemed like everyone was thrilled to have her there.

Joyce sat next to her, rubbing her back reassuringly, while the chief questioned her about where she'd been for the past year. He was a harsh man, but even still, El could see the slight smirk on his face.

She didn't answer any of Hopper's questions, of course. There was no way she even wanted to think about *that place*, let alone talk about it, so Eleven remained silent.

When the boys came, Dustin and Lucas rushed to envelope her into a hug. She stiffened up for a moment before using her powers to push them off of her. They meant well, she knew that, but their touchiness was just *too much* in that moment.

Then there was Mike. He didn't run up to her like the other boys did, instead he just stood in the doorway staring at her. Eleven didn't need telepathy to tell that his heart was beating almost as fast as hers was.

After a few minutes of stunned silence, Mike made his way to sit on the other side of her, keeping himself a few inches away from her. He never said a word, which Eleven knew was strange for him. He had talked so much in that one week she knew him, she knew it must be

rare to find him just as speechless as her.

Eventually the chief gave up with his questions, letting out a sigh when El didn't answer for about the fifteenth time. He announced for Joyce and the boys to come with him to the kitchen, El knew that meant to discuss her, but she ignored it. Joyce got up from her seat and Dustin and Lucas followed Hopper.

"Mike, come on," Dustin called, upon seeing his friend still unmoving on the couch.

"J- Just give me a minute."

There it was, the voice that made Eleven's heart ache. It was the first time she'd heard him talk in a year, and Mike's voice was resonating deep inside her.

Mike didn't want to go into the kitchen with everyone else, he didn't want to step away from Eleven's side for a second. He felt like even if he just turned around, or if he just closed his eyes to blink, she'd be gone again. So instead he just sat right by her, drinking in her image because she was finally back.

He wanted to say something. There were so many things he wanted to say, so many feelings he wanted to get out. She'd been gone for a *year*, how was he supposed to explain just how much he had missed her?

"You're home," He finally managed to say. It wasn't much, and it wasn't even the tip of the iceberg of feelings he wanted to get out to her, but it was all he could say right now.

Home. That was a weird word, and a word so many take for granted. El never had much of a home, but she had spent the past year just fighting to get back to Hawkins.

Mike had said that word to her before, when she came back to his house after saving him at the quarry. He had said he was happy she was home. That moment was the first time she ever truly felt *at home*, it was the first time she ever felt she had a place to belong to, a place she felt accepted.

But she wasn't at Mike's house now, and though she wished for it, from the way Joyce and Hopper were whispering in the other room, it didn't seem like she'd be going back there. So why did she still feel like she was back home already?

Maybe that place wasn't her home, maybe instead it was the fact that all the people she cared about were around her once more. Joyce's reassuring hand on her back, Dustin and Lucas's tight hug, the way Mike was making her feel like her heart had dropped into her stomach, that was what was really her home.

She nodded her head slightly, letting Mike know she heard him, and thought she didn't want to talk quite yet, she wanted him to know she *agreed*, she really was finally *home*.

Mike smiled at her and gulped, the butterflies he hadn't felt in a year were now erupting in his stomach once more, making his heart feel like it was fluttering out his throat. He wanted to pull El into a hug, to squeeze her so hard all the bones in her body would break. He wanted to kiss her again, to slam his face onto hers like he had once before. He couldn't do it though, he saw the way she pulled away from Dustin and Lucas's hug before, she was too terrified to talk, having only just now stopped shaking.

"Uh, El?" He called for her.

She looked over at him, eye contact melting his heart in ways he yelled at himself to stop.

She's just looking at you, why are you freaking out?! She's traumatized and all you can think about is kissing her!

His mind continued to yell at him, but El interrupted. For the first time in so long, Mike heard the voice that sounded like music, like angels, the voice he'd spent so long craving to hear just once more.

"Yes?"

Mike took a deep breath, "C- Can I touch you?"

El slowly nodded her head, and Mike let out a breath. He reached out for her, deciding to just hold her hand. It wasn't the giant bear hug he

so desperately wanted to pull her in, but it was where he figured she'd be comfortable.

He interlaced his fingers with hers, and was surprised at how strongly she was gripping onto him. Mike realized she must be as worried of letting him go as he was about her.

The two didn't say anything, just squeezing each other's hands reassuringly. Eventually El scooted herself closer to Mike, resting her head on his shoulder.

They tuned out the discussion coming from the kitchen, instead just focusing on listening to one another's breathing. It was silent between them, and they had so many things to say, so many feelings to get out from their year separated, but none of that mattered quite yet.

They would have time to say all the words left unspoken that night, because all that mattered in that moment was that they were together once more.